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SUBJECT: CODEL TAUSCHER'S MEETING WITH POLISH FM SIKORSKI

Classified By: DCM - Quanrud by reason 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. In a December 16 conversation visiting CODEL Tauscher and Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski discussed Missile Defense, including Russian views of MD in Europe, Georgia and Afghanistan. On Missile Defense, Congresswoman Tauscher described Congressional plans to seek a strategic pause in work on the European MD site to allow for further testing of the three stage system. The Congresswoman assured the Poles that Congress would not forget or overlook the significant political risk Poland had taken on by signing the BMDA with the U.S., and suggested that support might come in the form of higher FMF and FMS as well as support for a PAC III deployment in Poland. On Afghanistan, the FM described his work to increase the Polish deployment there, as well as to bring 4-5 PRTs to southern Afghanistan with EU involvement. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the House Armed Services Committee, led a bipartisan delegation to Warsaw December 16-17 for talks with Polish officials and elected representatives on MD, the status of transatlantic relations, NATO, and Russia. Minister Sikorski was accompanied by Deputy Minister of Defense Komorowski, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Grudzinski, Ambassador Kobieracki and America's Desk Director Orzechowski. Other CODEL meetings reported septel.

US-RUSSIA TCBM DISCUSSIONS

¶3. (C) FM Sikorski commented that it appeared the Russians had retracted their position significantly in TCBM talks led by U/S Rood this week in Moscow. Congresswoman Tauscher responded that this seemed more like frustration than fact. There is scope to work with the Russians on a regional Missile Defense system located in the Mediterranean, based on PAC III and Aegis. The Russians should understand that the European 3rd site has nothing to do with them. When in Moscow this week, the CODEL had heard from the GOR a familiar refrain -- that the European MD site is just the beginning, and will lead to both offensive capabilities and a further expansion of MD into space. This is an account that will benefit from a pause to change players, even if the message does not change.

GEORGIA

¶4. (C) Sikorski burnished his credentials on Georgia (he was the first NATO FM to go to Georgia and sold the Georgians anti-aircraft missiles when that idea was unpopular among allies), but even as he had tried to help Georgia, he warned the leadership, "not to let yourself be provoked by the Russians." Two months prior to the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Sikorski reminded Saakashvili that Georgia's biggest asset was its perceived role as superpower victim.

The day before the outbreak of hostilities, Georgia's FM called Sikorski to inform that Georgia "may have to use all available resources to deal with South Ossetia." Sikorski's response echoed others warnings that it would be a mistake to challenge Russia militarily. Georgia has never beaten Russia -- at least the Poles did once. The timing was particularly poor -- just three months later, the situation would have been very different.

15. (C) Congresswoman Tauscher suggested that had the USG, in the run up to Bucharest, conceded that MAP, as such, would not be offered to Georgia and Ukraine, and shifted tactics, pushing for a MAP-like outcome instead, the Georgians would have had something tangible to take home. It would have allowed Saakashvili to save face and he might not have felt forced to seek conflict with Russia. Sikorski agreed that something like the final outcome of the recent NATO FM meeting in Brussels might have been possible at Bucharest, as it might have met the German objection to MAP.

MISSILE DEFENSE

16. (C) Congresswoman Sanchez opened the discussion on Missile Defense by suggesting that a strategic pause might benefit many issues, including MD. Pushing a project like Missile Defense forward at a rapid pace was creating excessive stress, including with Russia. Sikorski acknowledged that a pause is a legitimate response, given the current uncertainties, but he asked the CODEL to remember that Russia is preparing to test the incoming administration, and the new administration cannot afford to be seen as weak.

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17. (C) Picking up further on the MD theme, Congresswoman Tauscher said that congressional sentiment was very clear on this matter: until more testing had been completed on the three-stage system, no further steps would be taken towards the European deployment. This was not a question of Congressional support for the program -- Congress had allocated some \$18 billion over the last two years for MD, and the PAC III, Thad and Aegis systems were all priorities. The test of the two stage interceptor three weeks ago did not prove that the system works, as the countermeasure portion of the test malfunctioned. Congress wants the system to work, in part because of the need for a credible deterrent for North Korea and Iran.

18. (C) Congresswoman Tauscher stressed that in the very short term, the USG will engage in further testing, but we will ensure that the Russians do not see this as a concession to them. The U.S. needs to act responsibly and make sure that our "very good friends in Poland" don't misunderstand what is motivating our actions. This would not be a delay of change in plan -- this is simply a return to what we should have done before. The three stage interceptor system works, so testing the two stage system will not require starting from scratch.

19. (C) Turning to the impact of this discussion on Poland, Congresswoman Tauscher expressed understanding for the difficult position we have placed the Polish Government in because of our failures. We understand that the Polish Government expended considerable political capital to sign the BMDA with the USG. U.S.-Polish relations are "beyond significant" -- they are strategic, economic, even emotional. We are mindful of the importance of the relationship and we do not want you to suffer for our mistakes. Given this, what can we do to help?

110. (C) Sikorski replied that the Congresswoman's' arguments on MD sounded reasonable, and expressed appreciation for her understanding of the sensitivity of the Polish Government's position. MD is, however, a US project, funded with US money, and long term in nature. However, the bilateral

relationship would be greatly strengthened if we would jointly undertake to fulfill the terms of the Joint Political Declaration, signed at the same time as the BMDA. In particular, we need to proceed with the deployment of the Patriot battery (PAC III) to Poland and the establishment of the permanent garrison. Congresswoman Tauscher agreed.

¶11. (C) Sikorski then turned the floor to Deputy Minister of Defense Komorowski, who noted that the PAC III deployment was an extremely important step in improving Poland's Air Defense posture. One battery would not be enough, but it was a good start. In addition, it would be helpful to begin training Polish troops on the PAC III, given Poland's plans to purchase the system themselves. It was also important to integrate the PAC III into Poland's air defense system as much as possible, and it would be easier if Poland had more than one battery.

¶12. (C) Congresswoman Tauscher indicated that the Congress was looking at FMF and FMS for Poland for PAC III's. There are not enough PATRIOTS in Europe. We need a network comprised of short and medium-ranged shields in NATO, starting with the PAC III battery in Poland. We need a regional system that involves short and medium range missile defense that we can eventually bolt onto the long-range system -- moving in the direction of a fully networked system, rather than the patchwork of national systems currently at play. This begins here in Poland, and moves towards a system that eventually "NATO-ized." We want to stay on track with our agreements with Poland while also advancing NATO. The question is how to move forward to a permanent presence for the PAC III system here.

¶13. (C) Asked if the PAC III deployment was on track, Komorowski noted that a PATRIOT team had been to Poland just six weeks ago and was showed possible sites for the PAC III deployment. The MOD was looking forward to visiting Kaiserslautern in January to follow-up on the initial visit. What is important to Poland is that any delay with MD not also translate into a delay in the PAC III deployment and other bilateral cooperation. Congresswoman Tauscher agreed, noting that the goal was actually to accelerate the PAC II deployment in Poland, which Komorowski welcomed. Congresswoman Tauscher noted a meeting she had had with EUCOM Craddock earlier in the week, in which she had asked EUCOM to move forward on the PAC III deployment to Poland. "Polish good will needs to be met with U.S. good will," she added.

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AFGHANISTAN -----

¶14. (C) Turning to Afghanistan, Sikorski outlined a difficult situation. Armed incidents are up; the Taliban have access to or control some 72 percent of the country; the GOA has proven itself not up to the task and was riddled with corruption and plagued by poor governance; Karzai needed to be tougher. Looking ahead, the constellation of forces might prove helpful, including the a Pakistani President whose mother had been murdered by the Taliban; an election in Afghanistan; and the transfer of US troops from the Iraqi theater. He asked if he understood the U.S. position correctly, that if Europe was willing to play a greater role in Afghanistan, it would also be given a greater say? Congresswoman Tauscher confirmed this was so.

¶15. (C) Sikorski outline GoP plans for Afghanistan. He is pressing in GoP circles to increase the Polish contingent by another brigade, bringing total Polish troops in Afghanistan to 2,000. Also with Europe, Sikorski was trying to make the EUPOL mission more effective -- instead of training Afghan police to be traffic cops from Hamburg, EUPOL needed to shift its focus to paramilitary police training and robust policing. Playing to the EU strengthens (which were admittedly not in the military sphere) Sikorski relayed his

attempts to get the EU to staff several (4-5) PRTs in southern Afghanistan. With 4 or 5 more PRTs, better police training, and an increase in troop levels, Afghanistan could turn around.

¶16. (C) Congressman Larson noted the problems stemming from inadequate personnel -- we can claim territory, but not hold or rebuild it. He agreed that better police training would make a difference, and was heartened to hear the FM suggestions on this front. Rather than a troop "surge" the Congressman urged the room to think in terms of a substantial and sustained commitment," all the more true as we were starting from nearly the beginning. Sikorski added that Afghanistan should have been done properly from the onset. Perhaps the greatest tragedy will turn out to be the unfortunate early victories in Afghanistan, which emboldened thinking on Iraq. Congressman Larson commented that the Afghan engagement would be longer than anyone wanted, and we needed the help of our allies to succeed.

¶17. The cable was cleared by the CODEL.

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